Demographic aspects of the planned resettlement of settlements in Lazarevac municipality

The planned resettlement of settlements in the course of the expansion of open-cast mining in the Kolubara mining basin has an impact on all aspects of social life in the municipality of Lazarevac. Primarily, this impact is reflected in the demographic development of the area. The expansion of coal mining and the immediate proximity to Belgrade, are the cause of significant demographic shifts. The municipality has 33 settlements, a third of which are located in the exploitation area. The number of inhabitants in some settlements is drastically decreasing, and some of them are completely displaced, while on the other side, there is a sudden influx of population in the city of Lazarevac and the secondary centres of the municipality (Veliki Crljeni, Stepojevac), both from the municipal territory and from other parts of Serbia, motivated by the economic advantages of Lazarevac and its surroundings. This fact determines the trend of a constant increase in the number of inhabitants in urban settlements in all observed intercensal periods from 1948 to 2022, while the decline in the number of inhabitants in rural settlements has been observed since the 1981-1991 census period. The sudden increase in the number of inhabitants in urban settlements since the 1980s can be explained by the intensification of mining operations and the process of expropriation taking place in rural settlements. According to the last census in 2022 – 55,146 inhabitants live on the territory of Lazarevac municipality, of which 27,635 live in the only urban settlement in the municipality and 27,511 in rural settlements. The data indicates that for the first time, the urban population in the municipality exceeds the rural population. This paper focuses on analysing the impact of the decades-long development of mining activity on the territory of the municipality of Lazarevac on the population and the comprehensive development of the settlement, both in a positive and negative context. The research also focuses on the transformation of the settlement environment caused by the expansion of open-cast mining, with an emphasis on the changes in the demographic characteristics of the settlement. The paper is based on the analysis of data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, settlement regulation plans in the process of resettlement, the plan for the mining area of the Kolubara lignite basin and other sources relevant to the understanding of the given problem, as well as on the spatial representation of data using GIS software and tools. If we compare the dynamics of the expansion of the mines and the population of the Lazarevac municipality (before the start of open-cast mining and today), certain trends can be observed that make it possible to understand the demographic aspect of the process of planned displacement.

Keywords: planned resettlement, Kolubara mining basin, Lazarevac municipality, population